

60p

# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

The alien fleet  
Living thought forms  
100 years of the SPR  
Screaming skulls  
End of the beast

85



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# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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## In next week's issue

Continuing the series **Time**, we look at the phenomenon of timeslips – what can they teach us about the nature of time? It is well-known that opinions on the true nature of UFOs vary considerably. We examine the beliefs and ideas behind various **UFO cults** and ask whether hard evidence plays a less important role in their beliefs than simple faith. Continuing our series on the **Society for Psychical Research**, journalist and broadcaster Brian Inglis assesses the role of the SPR today, while in **Phantom hitch-hiker** we consider the widespread tales of casual passengers who disappear without trace. We conclude with a new series on **Black dogs**, with sightings from Devon to Scotland of Britain's special 'haunting' – a larger-than-life shaggy black dog with eyes like fiery red coals!

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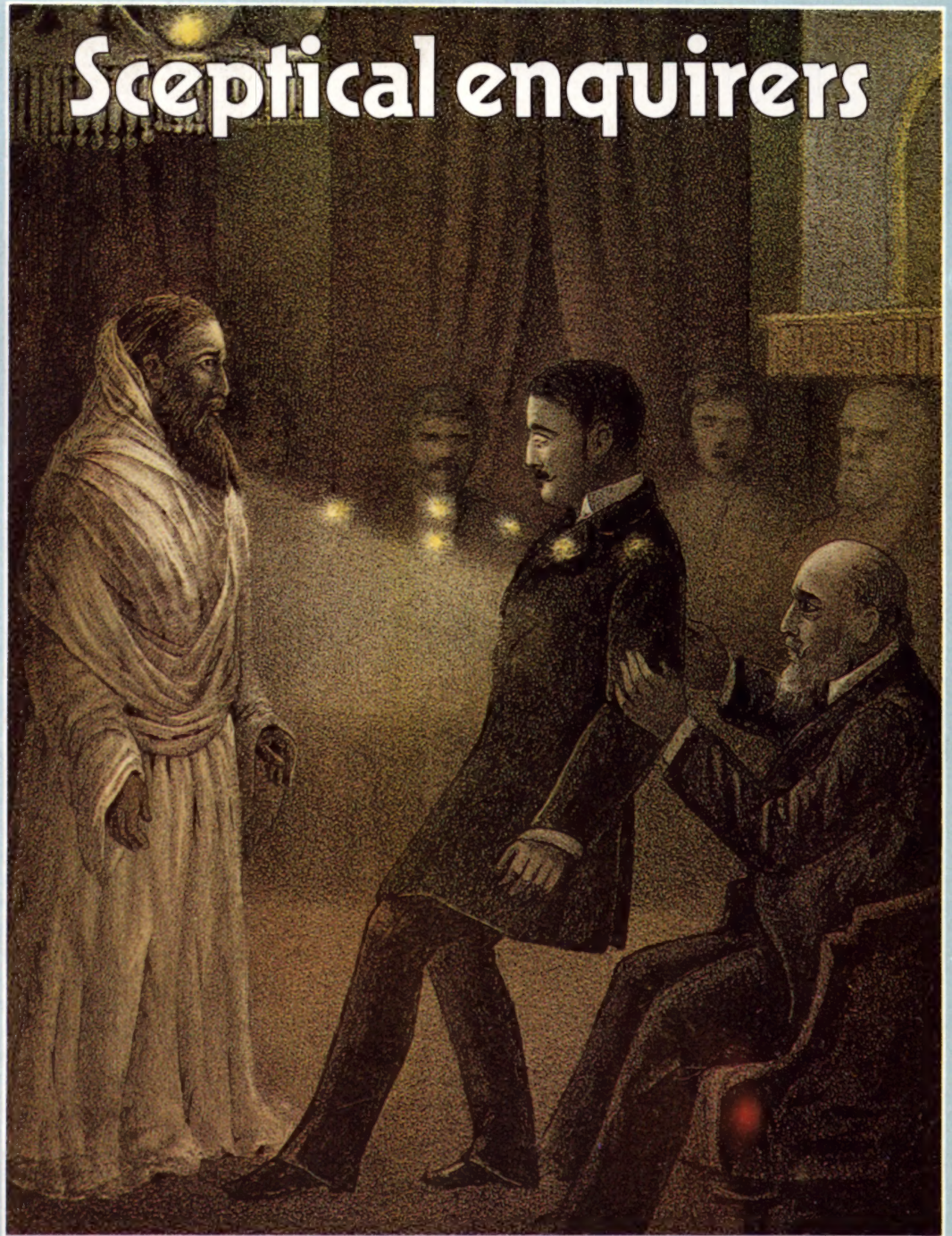
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# Sceptical enquirers

A sitter at a seance reels with shock as a spirit materialises before him. This kind of phenomenon has always been extremely rare – if, indeed, it has ever happened – and has been regarded by the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) with some caution. Over the years individual investigators from the society have denounced some mediums as frauds and consequently the SPR as a whole has gained a reputation as being anti-Spiritualist – and sceptical about many allied phenomena



**The Society for Psychical Research celebrated its centenary in 1982. ROY STEMMAN describes its sometimes chequered history and its continuing quest for some explanations for paranormal phenomena**

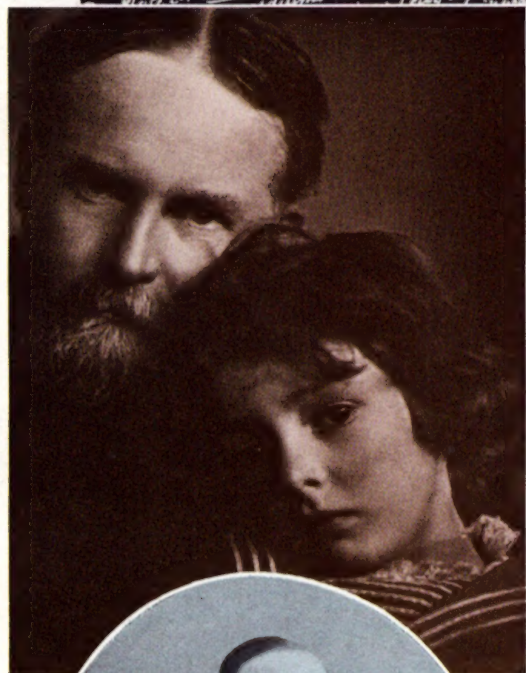
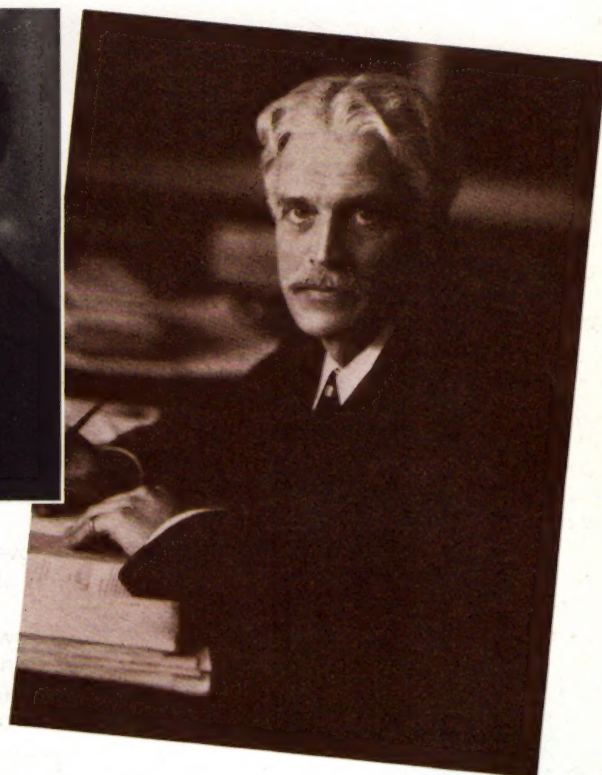
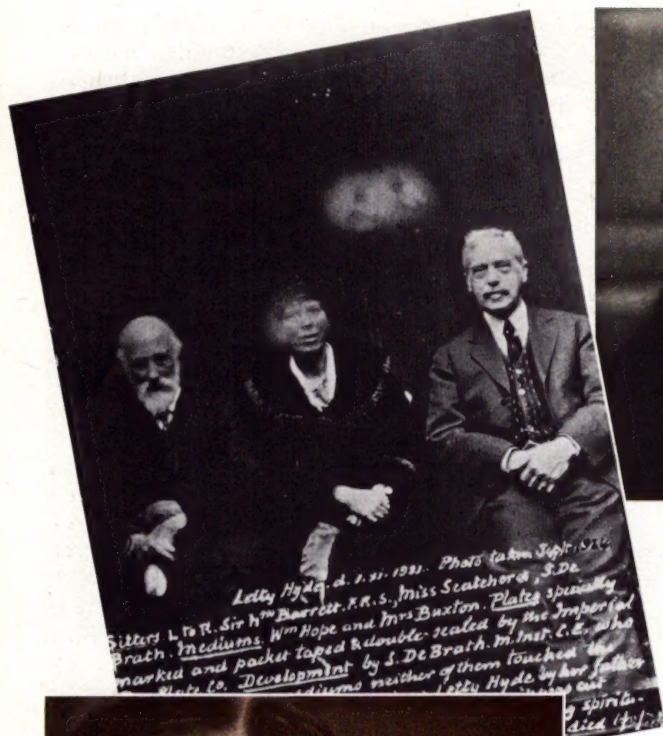
SPIRITUALISM HAD SWEEPED across the Atlantic and settled itself comfortably in the parlours of some of the best English families by the late 1870s. The wonders of the seance room were seldom out of the headlines and appeared to be little short of miraculous. Minds could communicate with other minds. Objects could vanish and reappear. Spirits could materialise and talk with the living. And a life hereafter was guaranteed for everyone.

It was against this exciting if bewildering background, rife with fraud and self-delusion, that a group of scientists, scholars and Spiritualists got together on 5 January 1882 to form the Society for Psychical Research (SPR).

Although the society was conceived at a meeting in the rooms of the British National Association of Spiritualists, its earliest work was more concerned with experiments in thought transference and the study of spontaneous psychic phenomena than with mediums or communicating with the dead.

Membership of the first SPR Council (the society was formally constituted on 20 February 1882) is indicative of the calibre of person it then attracted. President was





The founder members of the SPR were dissatisfied with extreme reactions to paranormal phenomena – crass credulity on the one hand and irrational scepticism on the other – and were determined to form a society that would establish new and high standards of investigation. Among the first members were (below left) W. Stainton Moses, a clergyman who was also a medium; (left, seen here with his son) Frederic W. H. Myers, a classical scholar from Cambridge; (above left, seated on the left) Sir William Barrett, a professor of physics who considered this photograph absolute proof of the genuineness of some psychic photographs; (above) Frank Podmore, an author who later became an outspoken sceptic, and (above right) G. W. Balfour, who was president of the SPR from 1906 to 1907

Henry Sidgwick, an outstanding Cambridge professor of classics with a well-deserved reputation as a critic and sceptic.

Among the other 18 council members were Sir William Barrett, professor of physics at the Royal College of Science in Dublin (who was responsible for calling the meeting that established the SPR); Frederic W.H. Myers, an eminent classical scholar who had studied under Sidgwick at Cambridge; Edmund Gurney, also a classical scholar; W. Stainton Moses, a clergyman turned schoolmaster who was a celebrated medium; and Frank Podmore, author and one-time Spiritualist – who was to become an outspoken sceptic.

### Shades of the Ghost Society

Many of the SPR's early supporters had been actively engaged in exploring psychic subjects for some time before its creation, through their connection with the Ghost Society at Cambridge – Myers and Gurney were members, as were many other early leaders of the SPR.

They all shared an intense interest in the deeper questions of life at a time when materialism seemed destined to erode religious beliefs. Most of them, as a result of personal experiences, were predisposed towards a belief in the existence of psychic phenomena, but their critical approach, particularly to mediums, soon resulted in many leading Spiritualists leaving the SPR.

The SPR has retained to this day an image of a learned, scientific and rather 'stuffy' body, which refuses to believe virtually every claim of paranormality. In fact, the society holds no corporate opinion, but its members, officers and committees most certainly do –



and some, over the years, have publicly declared their belief in the genuineness of a variety of psychical phenomena.

Apart from collecting material for a major survey, which was later published as *Phantasms of the living* (see box), the SPR also tackled another side of psychical research: the claims by some individuals to be able to produce physical phenomena, usually under conditions that made verification difficult.

When SPR members had sittings with William Eglinton, a contemporary medium, during which he was said to produce spirit writings on slates, several believed the results to be paranormal. Mrs Sidgwick and Dr Richard Hodgson, a young Australian researcher, were unconvinced, however, and said so in the SPR's *Journal*, which led to a heated controversy and some resignations.

Where physical phenomena were concerned, Hodgson was very sceptical and his refusal to accept at face value a favourable report by Sir Oliver Lodge on his experiences with an Italian medium, Eusapia Palladino, led to an invitation to her to visit England to be studied by the SPR.

Lodge, together with F.W.H. Myers, had attended seances conducted by Palladino in 1894 at the home of Professor Charles Richet in France and both were satisfied she was genuine. They persuaded Professor Sidgwick and his wife to witness some of the seances and they were also impressed. But when their report was published in the *SPR Journal*, Hodgson was highly critical.

In an attempt to settle the matter, the SPR arranged for Palladino to give a series of seances at Cambridge, England, starting on 31 July 1895. Palladino obliged by cheating. At a later seance, however, Myers found her genuine. The matter was never resolved.

While the SPR's researchers were seeking for the truth about psychic phenomena in the dark seance rooms of Cambridge and Naples,



Above: Eleanor Sidgwick, one of the SPR's founders

Below: a Victorian catalogue advertising 'self playing guitars' and 'sealed letter reading' – for a fee



the sceptical Dr Richard Hodgson was in America studying a remarkable 'mental' medium, Mrs Leonore Piper, who appeared to communicate with the dead.

The American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) – which was also founded on Professor William Barrett's initiative, in 1885 – had been studying Mrs Piper for several years, but when its research programme became too expensive, in 1889, it became a branch of the SPR in London, subsidised by its parent; as a result it was arranged for Mrs Piper and her daughters to winter in England to give a series of seances.

Elaborate precautions were taken to ensure that Mrs Piper could not acquire information about her hosts or their friends during her stay, and she was accompanied everywhere she went. Though the SPR committee that investigated her could not agree on the origin of her trance utterances (which purported to be from a spirit), they were unanimous in their opinion that they 'show that knowledge has been acquired by some intelligence in some supernatural fashion. . . .'

### A literary puzzle

The ASPR was able to study Mrs Piper for 30 years, and she returned to England in 1906, again at the SPR's invitation, for further tests. During the early years of this century she also made an important contribution to a series of automatic writing scripts that have come to be known as the 'cross correspondences' (see page 478).

Soon after the death of F.W.H. Myers in 1901, a number of mediums began receiving automatic scripts; in themselves they were meaningless, but they appeared to fit together like a literary jigsaw puzzle. The spirit author who controlled their hands claimed to be Myers.

Over a 30-year period more than 3000

One of the most important research projects in the SPR's early days was a study of spontaneous psychical phenomena. This resulted in the publication, in 1886, of *Phantasms of the living*, a two-volume work that ran to 1300 pages, by Gurney, Myers and Podmore. The book remains a classic in the annals of psychical research.

Many of the cases investigated in its pages concerned 'crisis apparitions' – hearing or seeing a vision of a person at a time when that person was experiencing a crisis or dying – and it led to the theory that such apparitions were created by telepathy.

Three years later, Professor Sidgwick reported that an SPR committee's investigation had produced 1200 pages of evidence supporting the reality of telepathy, and in the same year, 1889, a

## The quest begins

'census of hallucinations' began under his guidance.

Sidgwick's wife, helped by Miss Alice Johnson, did most of the work of collating the results of a question put to 17,000 people asking if, while awake, they had experienced a sensation of seeing or being touched by a living being or inanimate object, or hearing a voice, for which there was no obvious physical cause.

Analysis of the results showed that 1684 people had, among them, experienced 1942 hallucinations, 300 of which related to visions of individuals they recognised. In 80 of these cases the person seen had died within 12 hours, before or after the hallucination. In 32 instances, the person experiencing the vision had mentioned it to a third party before news of the death was received.



scripts were produced by seven principal mediums, all of whom – with the exception of Mrs Piper – were non-professional. The work of collecting and collating the scripts from these mediums, who lived in various parts of Britain, the United States, India and Egypt, was the largest and most elaborate research project ever undertaken by the SPR.

For reasons of space and privacy, the greater part of the scripts has never been published, but the view of those most familiar with them is that they do have a single pattern running through them. Whether that pattern was imposed by the discarnate Myers, or whether a more mundane theory of psychical connections between the mediums is the answer, remains an open question.

By the early part of the 20th century, English SPR members had a medium in their midst whose abilities were very similar to those of Mrs Piper. Gladys Osborne Leonard was an actress who discovered she possessed mediumistic talents. In 1918 she placed her services at the disposal of an SPR committee, with very favourable results.

The period between the two world wars proved to be the heyday of physical phenomena, and the SPR was kept busy studying the top international mediums, including 'Eva C' (the pseudonym of the French materialisation medium Marthe Beraud) in 1920; Willi Schneider, from Austria, in 1924, and his brother Rudi in 1932, and Margery Crandon, from America, in 1923 – to name only a few who gave seances in London for the society.

As well as the London studies of these mediums, SPR officers went abroad to watch them at work. Dr Eric Dingwall, the SPR's research officer in 1922, visited Munich to attend seances with Willi Schneider and was present, two years later, when the young



Gladys Osborne Leonard, an actress who became a very powerful physical medium. In 1918 – when many unscrupulous fake mediums were exploiting the despair and grief from the war – she offered herself to the SPR for investigation. On the whole, their findings were in her favour

Austrian demonstrated his powers in London for the SPR.

Although the phenomena were not impressive, Dingwall's report stated that the investigators were 'driven to the conclusion that the only reasonable hypothesis which covers the facts is that some supernormal agency produced the results'.

In 1932, Willi's brother Rudi gave 27 seances for the society in London during which infra-red equipment was used, unsuccessfully, to detect psychic manifestations. Nevertheless, some observers were impressed by the occurrence of telekinetic phenomena, such as the movement of a table.

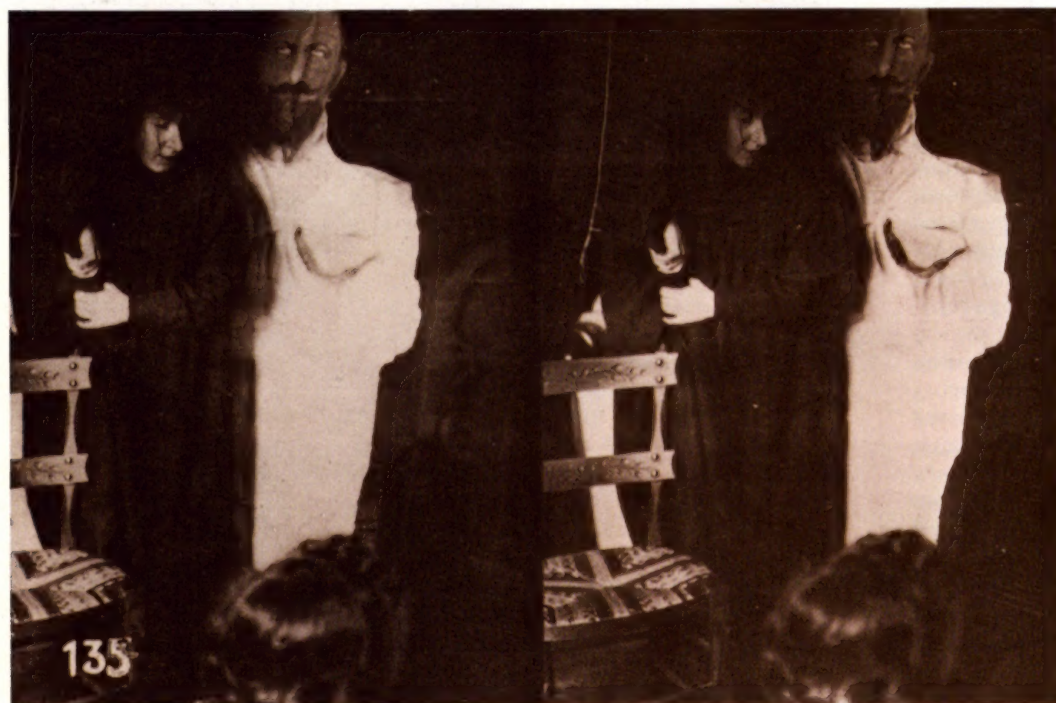
## The price of fame

The SPR did not have a monopoly as far as investigations into the paranormal were concerned. There was also Harry Price, the flamboyant independent investigator with a knack of gaining publicity, who ran the National Laboratory of Psychical Research.

Much of Price's research work is now regarded with suspicion – including his 'exposure' of Rudi Schneider – but his discovery and investigation of a young English medium, Stella Cranshaw, made an important contribution to psychical research.

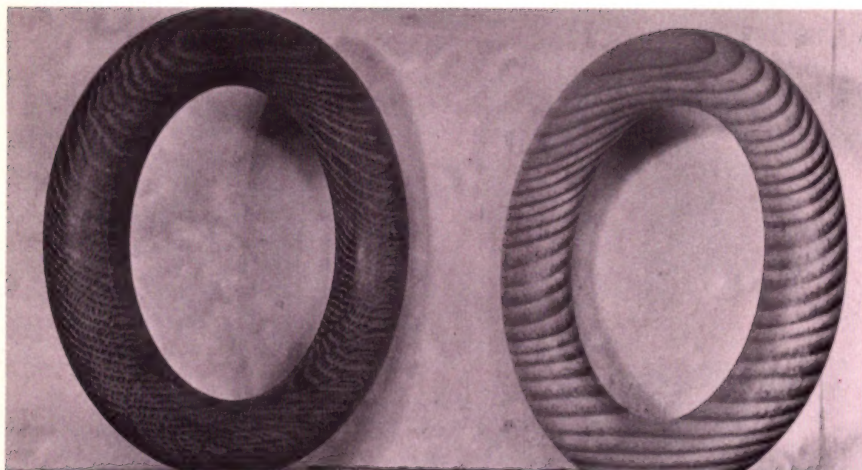
SPR observers attended some of the Cranshaw seances, and she also gave two seances especially for the society, in 1923. Dr Dingwall, present at one of the sessions, testified later that he observed a curious, and apparently genuine, phenomenon:

From near the medium's foot . . . I saw an egg-shaped body begin to crawl towards the centre of the floor under the table. It was white, and where the light was reflected it appeared opal. To the end nearest the medium was attached a thin white neck like a piece of



Far left and left: two stages in the alleged materialisation of the spirit 'Dorsmica', through the mediumship of 'Eva C', the French physical medium whose real name was Marthe Beraud. She was investigated by the SPR in 1920; in many ways her mediumship raised questions characteristic of psychical research as a whole. The evidence here – the materialisation – looks blatantly fake, but investigation found no proof that it was. The mystery remained unsolved





macaroni. It advanced towards the centre and then rapidly withdrew to the shadow. . . .

Those involved in psychical research at that time were unaware that they were witnessing the end of an era: for whatever reasons, physical phenomena have now virtually disappeared, at least on the scale experienced in the 1930s and 1940s.

The trend towards ESP research, so much a concern of the SPR's founders, began in the 1940s, influenced by the pioneering work of Dr J.B. Rhine in the United States. New and more sophisticated techniques were now available to study telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition.

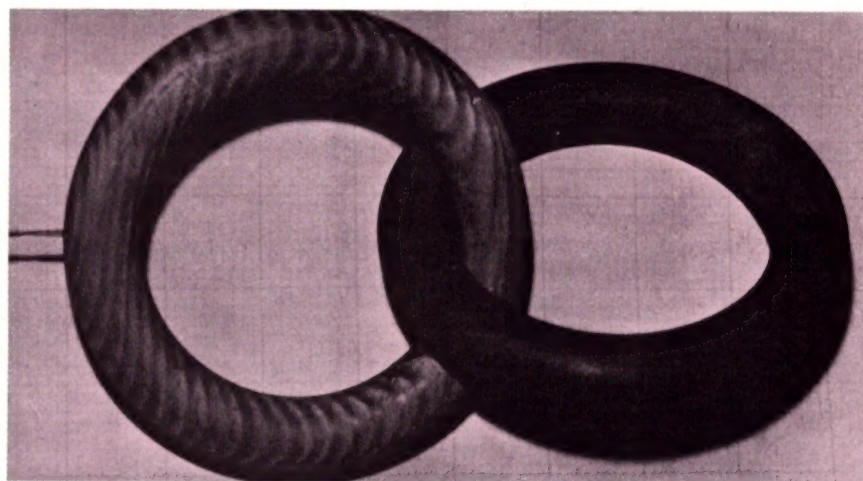
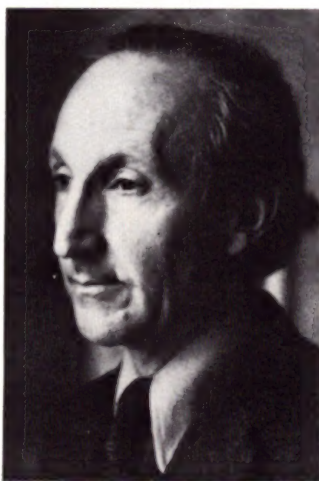
#### Cards on the table

G.N.M. Tyrrell, an electrical engineer (the SPR president from 1945 to 1946), devised a machine for testing ESP using lights in boxes and giving an automatic trace recording of the results. His adopted daughter was the subject and she produced impressive results.

Next came a series of experiments, conducted between 1941 and 1943 by Dr S.G. Soal and Mrs K.M. Goldney with Basil Shackleton. These straightforward telepathy tests, using a pack of cards with five different designs, appeared to show a remarkable 'displacement' effect – something that had been reported by other researchers – indicating that Shackleton was using clairvoyance to detect a card before it was selected by random number tables.

The Soal-Goldney results were regarded as one of the most impressive contributions to ESP research for years, but a reassessment has thrown considerable doubt on the accuracy of the experiments, suggesting that Soal 'fudged' the results to make them appear impressive.

Since the 1960s, even greater sophistication has been brought to bear on the research work carried out under the SPR's auspices or reported in its *Journal*. Radioactive degeneration has been used to introduce randomness in precognition tests, Dr John Beloff of Edinburgh University (SPR president from 1974 to 1976) pioneering such



When medium Margery Crandon demonstrated that solid wooden rings (top) could interlock (above), Sir Oliver Lodge believed this was a 'blow for materialist scientists'. The rings, however, separated again. Dr John Beloff (centre) says that anomalous phenomena such as permanently linked rings would be the ideal centrepiece of a museum of the paranormal

research in Britain in 1961. Altered states of consciousness have been explored in the search for psychic powers, and electronics have come to the aid of PK researchers.

The paranormal seems to have been wrested from the seance room and placed firmly in the laboratory where, as far as the layman is concerned, it is likely to be buried beneath a welter of statistics, theories and equations – which make it seem very remote from the vivid spontaneous phenomena that many people experience. Psychical research and its related field work is being replaced with a cold and clinical parapsychology.

But perhaps that is not a bad thing, if it succeeds in capturing elusive paranormal powers and making them work to order, as Julian Isaacs is seeking to do with his British minilab programme (see page 1306). Then perhaps science will take seriously the suggestion of Sir Alister Hardy (SPR president from 1965 to 1969), in his presidential address to the zoological section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1949. He argued that telepathy could have great relevance to biological studies, and he enlarged on that theory later by suggesting that if telepathy is accepted 'then we must expect something akin to it . . . to mould the patterns of behaviour among members of all species.' And in 1981 a new SPR member, Dr Rupert Sheldrake, proposed a controversial theory of evolution (see page 1141) that could, if proved to have a factual basis, provide the 'something akin' to telepathy in

other species that Sir Alister Hardy was hoping for.

But the SPR holds no 'official' opinions. Its members are free to believe or disbelieve what they like. Its attitude was summed up by Sir Oliver Lodge (SPR president from 1901 to 1903) and his words still epitomise the SPR's uncompromising approach: ' . . . it is better to hesitate too long over a truth than to welcome an error, for a false gleam may lead us far astray unless it is soon detected.'

*Brian Inglis gives his view of the role of SPR today. See page 1718*



**From the vast expanses of the world's oceans come reports of mysterious underwater entities that are as intriguing as UFOs. JANET and COLIN BORD describe more spectacular sightings of unidentified submarine objects**

SINCE THE END of the Second World War the navies of the world have frequently tracked large submarine craft whose performance is greatly superior to anything that they themselves possess. In common with unidentified submarine objects (USOs), these mystery craft seem to congregate in particular areas of this planet, two of the most notable being the Scandinavian waters and off the eastern coast of South America.

When we mention submarines and Scandinavian offshore waters, many readers' minds will immediately jump to the incident of autumn 1981 when a Russian captain ran his submarine ashore at Karlskrona, Sweden, due to 'faulty navigation'. Undoubtedly the Russians like to keep themselves informed about the navies of other nations and to keep track of their exercises and activity, and some of the unidentified submarines that have been located have doubtless been Russian. But, just as the Russians were originally blamed for the Swedish 'ghost rockets' of 1946 (see page 1625), so may they equally unjustifiably have been blamed for many of the mystery submarines reported since the 1950s.

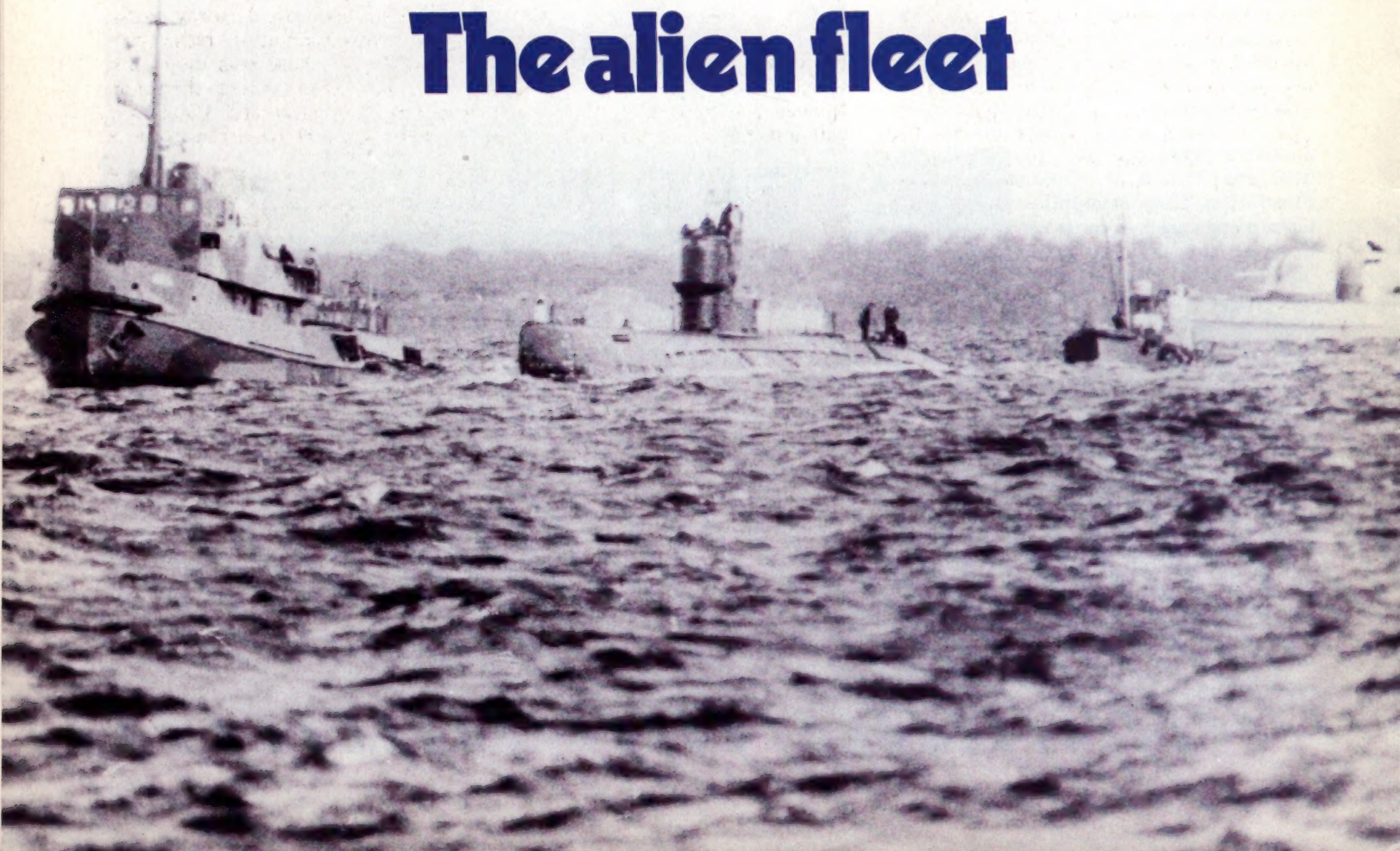
The performance and behaviour of some of these USOs exceed those of conventional

When naval forces detect unidentified submarine objects their first fear is that conventional enemies are intruding in national waters. In this case, in November 1981, the fears proved justified: Swedish forces trapped a Soviet submarine, which had a highly unconvincing excuse for being there. But perhaps, in the back of the naval commanders' minds, were memories of the occasions when USOs have been more baffling – resembling no vessel of human construction and displaying 'impossible' manoeuvrability

naval craft in the same way that Earth's aircraft are outperformed by UFOs. The maximum speed that the latest submarine can achieve is about 45 knots or 50 miles per hour (80 km/h), but these mystery submarines have been detected travelling underwater at over three times that speed. When on manoeuvres in the North Atlantic in 1963 the United States aircraft carrier *Wasp* and 12 other vessels detected a huge underwater craft travelling at 150 knots or 175 miles per hour (280 km/h). It stayed with them for four days, manoeuvring around them and diving to depths of 27,000 feet (8200 metres). The record depth for a dive by a known submarine is 6250 feet (1900 metres). During July 1972 an unidentified submarine cruised off the coast of Chile, usually at a depth of 3300 feet (1000 metres), far deeper than conventional submarines dive, for at this depth the tremendous pressure presents a very real danger.

Was it a Russian spy submarine that penetrated some 90 miles (150 kilometres) into the Norwegian fjords during November 1972? For three weeks the Norwegian Navy, assisted by NATO ships and aircraft, hunted the mysterious intruder, which was repeatedly tracked underwater and lost again in the Sogne fjord. Several dozen ships plus helicopters took part in the hunt and depth charges were systematically used, but the strange vessel could not be made to surface. On 23 November a large dark object was seen moving below the surface in the Luster fjord,

## The alien fleet







a branch of the main fjord, while at about the same time in the Aurlands fjord, another branch, a warship tracked a submarine with sonar. That night Martin Nielson saw six red rockets fired into the sky from below the surface, while nearby on an inaccessible peak overlooking the Aurlands fjord red and green lights were seen flashing. On 24 November the combined forces made a concerted attack with depth charges. The only result was that a very powerful – but unknown – jamming source opened up, completely disrupting all communications and rendering all radar and sonar inoperative. On 27 November the Norwegian authorities stated that the mystery submarine had left, still unseen and unidentified. Similar incidents have occurred in other Norwegian fjords, in Swedish coastal waters and around the coast of Greenland, usually in areas apparently devoid of military significance, but no vessels have ever been trapped, damaged or positively identified.

## Machines or monsters?

USOs are also seen in the lakes of Sweden. An object with what appeared to be a clear perspex dome was seen in Bullaren Lake, Bohuslan. There were repeated sightings in Lake Rasvalen of an object more than 50 feet (15 metres) long, and from Stensjön Lake in Ostergötland a USO with a conning tower was reported. We have reports from several other lakes of large dark bodies seen below the surface. Whether these are machines, or monsters of the Loch Ness type, is a matter for conjecture.

Another USO hunt similar to the Norwegian one took place in February 1960 in the Nuevo Gulf when for two weeks the Argentinian Navy chased two mystery submarines originally assumed to be Russian, but their speed and manoeuvrability must

Above: a Hawker-Siddeley Nimrod, one of the most powerful anti-submarine aircraft in operation. The ceaseless reconnaissance carried out by the major powers in the search for hostile missile-carrying submarines may well be yielding large numbers of USO reports from military personnel

Below: a three-week USO search in Sogne fjord, Norway, ended fruitlessly with a depth charge attack



have caused the authorities to think again. Due to the continual UFO and USO activity along this coastline, the locals were openly speaking of 'the Martians' who, they believed, operated from underwater bases. Eight months earlier in Buenos Aires harbour the naval authorities had been having trouble with a large, fast and very manoeuvrable USO that was shaped like a fish and was silver in colour. Its distinctive feature was a large vertical tail fin such as might be seen on an airliner. They knew what it looked like because they were able to send down divers to examine the craft, but they were not able to identify it.

During 1978 there was a tremendous wave of UFO activity over Italy; more than 500 reports were made and after all the errors and hoaxes had been eliminated the figures still indicated that a tremendous amount of activity had taken place, which had risen to a peak in the last three months of the year. Along the Adriatic coastline the unexplained phenomena included columns of water rising from calm seas to a height of 100 feet (30 metres), red and white lights following fishing boats at night, USOs seen on or below the surface, emerging and diving into the sea, and electrical interference on radar, radio and television equipment. Fishermen refused to go to sea without naval protection. On the evening of 9 November Nello di Valentino, captain of an Italian naval boat sent to patrol the coast, saw, with two of his men, a brilliant red light emerge from the sea 1100 yards (1000 metres) away. It rose to a height of 1000 to 1300 feet (300 to 400 metres) and then flew quickly away to the east. While this was happening, radio communication with the shore was disrupted. Many of the population spent the night hours watching for UFOs and USOs, and inevitably some normal occurrences were



## Unidentified submarine objects

thought to be of extra-terrestrial origin. In the dawn light of 7 December in the Gulf of Venice near Cáorle, hundreds of people who had been watching lights at sea during the night saw with alarm strange craft and entities emerging from the water. This turned out to be a combined air/naval exercise with amphibious craft and troops.

Not so easily explained is the experience of three French fishermen from the Mediterranean port of Le Brusc who, at 11 p.m. on 1 August 1962, were out in their boats on a clear, calm night. About 330 yards (300 metres) away a long metallic craft appeared, moving slowly on the surface. The men discussed it among themselves and agreed that it must be a submarine, though not of a type they could identify. The water next to the craft became disturbed and a dozen frogmen emerged from the water and climbed onto the strange submarine. The Frenchmen hailed them across the water with a friendly greeting, but the strangers took no notice as they climbed inside the vessel, until the last one was about to descend. Before doing so he turned towards the fishermen and raised his right arm in acknowledgement. Then he too disappeared into the craft. The amazed fishermen watched the strange object rise into the air and hang just above the waves. Red and green lights flashed, and it slowly started to revolve from left to right. As it did so, the body glowed with an orange light and, describing a graceful arc above the sea, it accelerated rapidly into the sky until the glowing dot could no longer be distinguished.

Similar night activities have been recorded elsewhere: only a month earlier in the Gulf of Catalina, south of Los Angeles, a chartered fishing boat skipper and his mate studied a strange vessel through their night glasses from 440 yards (400 metres) away. It appeared to be a submarine low in the water, steel-grey and without markings. It carried an odd after-structure around which five

figures could be seen moving, apparently working on something. After a time the mystery submarine started to move and the fishing boat skipper had to take evasive action in order to avoid being run down. The strange vessel swept by them at high speed. It was noiseless and left no wake, but made a big swell in the water as it headed towards the open sea. The naval authorities were interested in the men's report, and during an interview showed them silhouettes of foreign submarines in an attempt at identification.

### Artefacts from the ocean

The origin of these mysterious usos and their amphibious crews remains unknown, but a clue to the purpose of their nocturnal activities might possibly be gained from some of the elusive artefacts that they may have left on the sea bed in some locations. One example is the shiny metal cylinder 23 feet (7 metres) long and 10 feet (3 metres) in diameter that a Spanish aqualung diver found on the sea bed on the Spanish Mediterranean coast in July 1970. The smooth rivetless walls of the cylinder had no apparent opening and as it was so clean it could hardly have been underwater for long. The next morning he returned to have another look, but the object was gone. He searched the area but could not find it. A similar object may have been found by Martin Meylach, a treasure hunter, on the coast of Miami, Florida, in September 1966. Meylach returned with two naval divers. Whether the object was salvaged or disappeared like the Spanish object, we do not know. Air Force officials denied that it could have been a missile dropped by an aircraft. In April 1967 two Danish boys saw a UFO drop several objects into the Kattegat Strait near Sjaellands Odde, 50 miles (80 kilometres) north-east of Copenhagen. Matter that was later recovered included 'lime and inorganic [sic] coal, combined in a manner completely unknown'. Lorentz Johnson watched

### Further reading

John A. Keel, *Strange creatures from time and space*, Sphere 1976  
Jim and Coral Lorenzen, *UFOs over the Americas*, Signet (New York) 1968  
Ivan T. Sanderson, *Invisible residents*, World Publishing Co. (New York) 1970



Left: the USO that attracted the attention of the authorities in Buenos Aires harbour in 1959 was unusual in having a fin resembling an aircraft's. Though it was fast and manoeuvrable, it stayed still long enough to permit divers to examine it. The numerous USO reports in the area led local people to joke about underwater 'Martians'



as a glowing cigar dropped two long objects into the waters of Namsen fjord in December 1959. Some while later, UFO investigators using sonar found an object 20 feet (6 metres) long by 7 feet (2.1 metres) high, but at a depth of 300 feet (90 metres) it was too difficult for divers to reach. They did report that they could see wheel tracks on the bottom, leading out to sea. Unidentified tracks 3 feet (1 metre) wide, seemingly ploughed by something resembling a globe, were found on a beach in Venezuela in August 1967. Two days later two American scientists arrived to study the tracks and apparently found them of great interest. The UFO that was seen to land and take off from the sea at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1970

The French port of Le Brusc (below) was the scene of an extraordinary USO sighting in August 1962. Three fishermen watched as a submarine-like craft took a dozen 'frogmen' on board – then flew away (bottom)

technology to the point that they can now easily make interstellar journeys in their craft, which we know as UFOs and USOs.

UFO researcher John Keel suggests that 'someone is operating a clandestine air force and navy on this planet', and theorises that underwater bases may be in the regions above the Arctic Circle. The founders of the Aerial Phenomena Research Organisation (APRO), Jim and Coral Lorenzen, suggest that USO phenomena are a result of the mapping and mining operations carried out by extra-terrestrials who have arrived in UFOs from other planets. In 1973 the Argentine Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena stated that following years of investigation and research they now have no doubt that machines from another world have established undersea bases in the Gulfs of San Matias and San Jorge on the Patagonian coast; while in Venezuela so many UFOs have been seen diving into and emerging from the Caribbean Sea that many people believe undersea bases exist, though opinions vary on whether these are in the ocean depths, the coastal shallows, or in great 'mother ships' lying on the sea bed. The value of undersea bases for a technologically advanced but secretive civilisation that might share our planet is obvious. But the underwater world is still a largely unknown environment and, as in so much of ufology, the proof continues to elude investigators.



left a red cylinder in the water, which was later collected by a police launch (see page 1139). Apparently the governments of the world take a greater interest in these underwater activities than they wish to admit, but how much they have learned from the artefacts they have salvaged is unknown.

In 1970 Ivan T. Sanderson, biologist and founder of the Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained (SITU), published his book *Invisible residents* in which he presents some of the material that we have been examining. In it he suggests that beneath the oceans could live a far older race than human kind, possibly descended from the life that did not leave the primeval seas to develop on land but remained to develop more rapidly underwater. Being many millions of years ahead of humanity, they avoid direct contact with the primitive life – mankind – on the planet's surface and have developed their





**Apparitions, many researchers believe, exist only in the human mind. But what of the art, allegedly practised by Tibetan adepts, of making thought forms materialise so strongly that they can be seen by other people? FRANCIS KING investigates**

CONDITIONS ON THE ROAD from China to Lhasa, the forbidden capital city of Tibet, were even worse than usual in the winter of 1923 to 1924. Nevertheless, small numbers of travellers, mostly pilgrims wishing to obtain spiritual merit by visiting the holy city and seeing its semi-divine ruler, the Dalai Lama, struggled onwards through the bitter winds and heavy snow. Among them was an elderly woman who appeared to be a peasant from some distant province of the god-king's empire.

The woman was poorly dressed and equipped. Her red woollen skirt and waistcoat, her quilted jacket, and her cap with its lambskin earflaps, were worn and full of holes. From her shoulder hung an ancient leather bag, black with dirt. In this were the provisions for her journey: barley meal, a piece of dried bacon, a brick of compressed tea, a tube of rancid butter, and a little salt and soda.

With her black hair coated with grease and her dark brown face, she looked like a typical peasant woman. But her hair was really white, dyed with Chinese ink, and her complexion took its colour from oil mixed with cocoa and crushed charcoal. For this Tibetan peasant woman was in reality Alexandra David-Neel, a Frenchwoman who, 30 years before, had been an opera singer of note who had been warmly congratulated by Jules Massenet for her performance in the title role of his opera *Manon*. In the intervening years

Mme David-Neel had travelled to strange places and had undergone even stranger experiences. These had included meeting a magician with the ability to cast spells to hurl flying rice cakes at his enemies, and learning the techniques of *tumo*, an occult art that enables its adepts to sit naked amid the Himalayan snows. Most extraordinary of all, she had constructed, by means of mental and psychic exercises, a *tulpa* – a phantom form born solely from the imagination, and yet so strongly vitalised by the adept's visualisation and will that it actually becomes visible to other people. A tulpa is, to put it another way, an extremely powerful example of what occultists term a thought form.

To understand the nature of the tulpa one has to appreciate that, as far as Tibetan Buddhists (and most Western occultists) are concerned, thought is far more than an intellectual function. Every thought, they believe, affects the 'mind-stuff' that permeates the world of matter in very much the same way as a stone thrown into a lake makes ripples upon the water's surface. A thought, in other words, produces a 'thought ripple'.

Usually these thought ripples have only a short life. They decay almost as soon as they are created and make no lasting impression on the mind-stuff interpenetrating the physical plane. If, however, the thought is particularly intense, the product of deep passion or fear, or if it is of long duration, the subject of much brooding and meditation, the thought ripple builds the mind-stuff into a more permanent thought form, one that has a longer and more intense life.

Tulpas and other thought forms are not considered by Tibetan Buddhists to be 'real' – but neither, according to them, is the world of matter that seemingly surrounds us. Both are illusory. As a Buddhist classic from the first century AD expresses it:

All phenomena are originally in the

Below: pilgrims approach the holy city of Lhasa, the forbidden capital of Tibet, in a photograph taken in the 1930s; this modern photograph (below right) testifies to the continuing practice of this arduous form of religious devotion. One of the most remarkable pilgrims to have undertaken this journey was Alexandra David-Neel (right, with a companion, the lama Yongden) who, in the 1920s, travelled throughout Tibet and learned many of the secrets of the Tibetan Buddhists – including the art of making thought forms materialise

# The word made flesh







mind and have really no outward form; therefore, as there is no form, it is an error to think that anything is there. All phenomena merely arise from false notions in the mind. If the mind is independent of these false ideas, then all phenomena disappear.

If the beliefs about thought forms held by Tibetan Buddhists, by mystics and magicians, are justified, then many ghostly happenings, hauntings, and cases of localities endowed with a strong 'psychic atmosphere' are easily explained. It seems plausible, for example, that the thought forms created by the violent and passionate mental processes of a murderer, supplemented by the terror stricken emotions of a victim, could linger around the scene of the crime for months, years, or even centuries. This could produce intense depression and anxiety in those who visited the 'haunted' spot and, if the thought

forms were sufficiently vivified and powerful, 'apparitions', such as a re-enactment of the crime, might be witnessed by people possessed of psychic sensitivity.

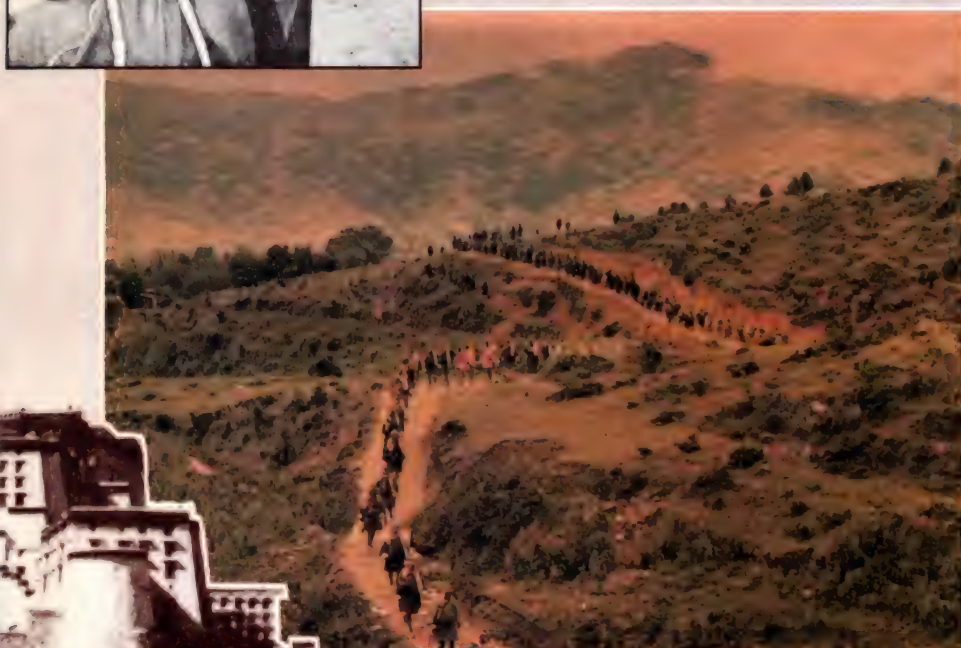
Sometimes, it is claimed by students of the occult, the 'spirits' that haunt a particular spot are tulpas, thought forms that have been deliberately created by a sorcerer for his own purposes.

The existence of extremely potent thought forms that re-enact the past would explain the worldwide reports of visitors to old battlefields 'witnessing' military encounters that took place long before. The sites of the battle of Naseby, which took place during England's Civil War (see page 1341) and of the 1942 commando raid on Dieppe (see page 910), are among battlefields that enjoy such ghostly reputations.

A tulpa is no more than an extremely powerful thought form, no different in its essential nature from many other ghostly apparitions. Where, however, it does differ from a normal thought form is that it has come into existence, not as a result of an accident, a side effect of a mental process, but as the result of a deliberate act of will.

The word tulpa is a Tibetan one, but there are adepts in almost every part of the world who believe they are able to manufacture these beings by first drawing together and coagulating some of the mind-stuff of the Universe into a form, and then transferring to it some of their own vitality.

In Bengal, home of much Indian occultism, the technique is called *kriya shakti* ('creative power'), and is studied and practised by the adepts of Tantrism, a religious-magical system concerned with the spiritual aspects of sexuality numbering both Hindus





and Buddhists among its devotees. Initiates of 'left-handed' Tantric cults – that is to say, cults in which men and woman engage in ritual sexual intercourse for mystical and magical purposes – are considered particularly skilled in *kriya shakti*. This is because it is thought that the intense physical and cerebral excitement of the orgasm engenders quite exceptionally vigorous thought forms.

Many Tibetan mystical techniques originated in Bengal, particularly in Bengali Tantrism, and there is a very strong resemblance between the physical, mental and spiritual exercises used by the Tantric yogis of Bengal and the secret inner disciplines of Tibetan Buddhism. It thus seems likely that Tibetans originally derived their theories about tulpas, and their methods of creating these strange beings, from Bengali practitioners of *kriya shakti*.

Students of tulpa magic begin their training in the art of creating these thought beings

by adopting one of the many gods or goddesses of the Tibetan pantheon as a 'tutelary deity' – a sort of patron saint. It must be emphasised that, while Tibetan initiates regard the gods respectfully, they do not look upon them with any great admiration. For, according to Buddhist belief, although the gods have great powers and are, in a sense, 'supernatural', they are just as much slaves of illusion, just as much trapped in the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth, as the humblest peasant.

The student retires to a hermitage or other secluded place and meditates on his tutelary deity, known as a *yidam*, for many hours. He combines a contemplation of the spiritual attributes traditionally associated with the *yidam* with visualisation exercises designed to build up in the mind's eye an image of the *yidam* as it is portrayed in paintings and statues.

To keep his concentration upon the *yidam*, to ensure that in every waking moment there is a single-pointed devotion to that being, the student continually chants traditional mystic phrases associated with the deity he serves.

He also constructs the *kyilkhors* – literally circles, but actually symbolic diagrams that may be of any shape – believed sacred to his god. Sometimes he will draw these with coloured inks on paper or wood, sometimes he will engrave them on copper or silver, sometimes he will outline them on his floor with coloured powders.

The preparation of the *kyilkhors* must be undertaken with care, for the slightest deviation from the traditional pattern associated with a particular *yidam* is believed to be extremely dangerous, putting the unwary student in peril of obsession, madness, death, or a stay of thousands of years in one of the 'hells' of Tibetan cosmology.

It is interesting to compare this belief with the idea, strongly held by many Western occultists, that if a magician engaged in 'evoking a spirit to visible appearance' draws his protective magical circle incorrectly, he will be 'torn in pieces'.

Below: a Buddhist monk with drum and incense stick. The rigorous mental and physical discipline taught by Buddhism enables some of its followers to attain paranormal powers; in her book *Initiations and initiates in Tibet* Alexandra David-Neel tells of a man (right, standing on left) who was reputed to be able to hypnotise and cause death at a distance



## Wolf at the door



In her book *Psychic self defence* (1930), the occultist Dion Fortune (left) relates how she once 'formulated a were-wolf accidentally'.

She had this alarming experience while she was brooding about her feelings of resentment against someone who had hurt her. Lying on her bed, she was thinking of the terrifying wolf-monster of Norse mythology, Fenrir, when suddenly she felt a large grey wolf materialise beside her. She was aware of its body pressing against hers.

From her reading about thought forms, she knew she must gain control of the beast immediately. So she dug her



Eventually, if the student has persisted with the prescribed exercises, he 'sees' his *yidam*, at first nebulously and briefly, but then persistently and with complete – and sometimes terrifying – clarity.

But this is only the first stage of the process. Meditation, visualisation of the *yidam*, the repetition of spells and contemplation of mystic diagrams is continued until the tulpa in the form of the *yidam* actually materialises. The devotee can feel the touch of the tulpa's feet when he lays his head upon them, he can see the creature's eye following him as he moves about, he can even conduct conversations with it.

### Thoughts made visible

Eventually the tulpa may be prepared to leave the vicinity of the *kyilkhors* and accompany the devotee on journeys. If the tulpa has been fully vitalised it will by now often be visible to others besides its creator.

Alexandra David-Neel tells how she 'saw' a phantom of this sort which, curiously enough, had not yet become visible to its creator. At the time Mme David-Neel had developed a great interest in Buddhist art. One afternoon she was visited by a Tibetan painter who specialised in portraying the 'wrathful deities'; as he approached she was astonished to see behind him the misty form of one of these much feared and rather unpleasant beings. She approached the phantom and stretched out an arm towards it; she felt as if she were 'touching a soft object whose substance gave way under the slight push'.

The painter told her that he had for some weeks been engaged in magical rites calling on the god whose form she had seen, and that he had spent the entire morning painting its picture.

Intrigued by this experience, Mme David-Neel set about making a tulpa for herself. To avoid being influenced by the many Tibetan paintings and images she had seen on her travels, she decided to 'make', not a god or goddess, but a fat, jolly-looking monk whom she could visualise very clearly.

elbow into its hairy ribs and exclaimed, 'If you can't behave yourself, you will have to go on the floor,' and pushed it off the bed. The animal disappeared through the wall.

The story was not yet over, however, for another member of the household said she had seen the eyes of the wolf in the corner of her room. Dion Fortune realised she must destroy the creature. Summoning the beast, she saw a thin thread joining it to her. She began to imagine she was drawing the life out of the beast along this thread. The wolf faded to a formless grey mass – and ceased to exist.



Two Tibetans dressed as gods. Tibetan Buddhists regard their gods with reverence, but believe that they are no less trapped in the cycles of birth, death and rebirth than any human being – and even attempt to make the gods materialise by a sustained effort of concentration

She began to concentrate her mind.

She retired to a hermitage and for some months devoted every waking minute to exercises in concentration and visualisation. She began to get brief glimpses of the monk out of the corner of her eye. He became more solid and lifelike in appearance – and eventually, when she left her hermitage and started on a caravan journey, he included himself in the party, becoming clearly visible and performing actions that she had neither commanded nor consciously expected him to do. He would, for instance, walk and stop to look around him as a traveller might do; sometimes Mme David-Neel even felt his robe brush against her, and once a hand seemed to touch her shoulder.

Mme David-Neel's tulpa eventually began to develop in an unexpected and unwished for manner.

He grew leaner, his expression became malignant, he was 'troublesome and bold'. One day a herdsman who brought Mme David-Neel a present of some butter saw the tulpa in her tent – and mistook it for a real monk. It had got out of control. Her creation turned into what she called a 'day-nightmare' and she decided to get rid of it. It took her six months of concentrated effort and meditation to do so.

If this, and many similar stories told in Tibet, are to be believed, the creation of a tulpa is not a matter to be undertaken lightly. It is a fascinating example of the power of the human mind to create its own reality.

### Further reading

Alexandra David-Neel, *Magic and mystery in Tibet*, Sphere 1977

Alexandra David-Neel, *Initiations and initiates in Tibet*, Rider 1977

Dion Fortune, *Psychic self defence*, Aquarian Press 1977



**There are skulls that create supernatural disturbances because they want to stay in a favourite place. Can such tales be true? FRANK SMYTH has investigated the strange behaviour of the screaming skulls that won't stay buried**

IN THE QUIET VILLAGE CHURCHYARD of Chilton Cantelo in Somerset, England, picturesque in both name and setting, a lichen-covered tombstone dated 1670 marks the last resting place of one Theophilus Broome – or at least the resting place of most of him. For over 300 years his skull, polished like old ivory, has lain in a cupboard at his former home, Chilton Cantelo Manor. This fulfils a deathbed wish that his head should remain in residence. Not unnaturally, his heirs were uneasy about the idea. But they quickly discovered that attempts to bury the skull with the rest of the body only created problems for everyone.

According to the inscription on Theophilus's tombstone, 'horrid noises, portentive of sad displeasure' were heard

Right: the polished skull of Theophilus Broome in its permanent resting place at Chilton Cantelo Manor in Somerset. The skull made 'horrid noises' when anyone tried to bury it

Below: the screaming skull of Bettiscombe Manor in Dorset. As recently as the early 1900s, the skull is said to have taken revenge on someone who tossed it out of the house it loved. Family tradition has it that the relic is the head of a West Indian slave



## The skulls that screamed

throughout the village when attempts were made to rebury his head. These ceased only when the bony relic was disinterred and once more returned to its comfortable cupboard.

Another skull, kept at Wardley Hall near Manchester, is said to be that of a Roman Catholic priest executed for treason in 1641. After being displayed on the tower of a Manchester church, it was recovered by a Catholic family and taken to Wardley. Like its Somerset equivalent, it made noises when removed from the premises. More, it was said to have caused violent thunderstorms. Besides all that, it refused to remain buried. In the chilling words of ghost hunter Eric Maple, it 'always managed to find its own way back [to the house] again'.

Burton Agnes Hall, a beautifully restored Elizabethan mansion in Humberside, contains the skull of Anne Griffith. She was the daughter of Sir Henry Griffith, who built

the residence in 1590. Like Theophilus Broome, Anne made the deathbed request that her head be cut off after she died and kept in the house, and the wish was granted. The skull, known locally as 'Owd Nance', was removed on several occasions. Each time it screamed horrifyingly until it was returned to the house. To prevent any further outbreak of such supernatural annoyances, 'Owd Nance' was bricked into the walls of the house itself in 1900 – and Burton Agnes has been mercifully tranquil ever since.

'Screaming skull' legends form a small but curious part of the British folklore tradition. One suggestion is that such stories have their roots in the Romano-British practice of making 'foundation sacrifices' – burying a human or animal victim in the foundations of a house to ensure luck and propitiate the gods. It was perhaps with some knowledge of such practices in mind that Anne Griffith and





Theophilus Broome made their strange requests. Another theory suggests that the stories arose from the rumoured custom of walling up monks and nuns as punishment for breaches of their chastity vows, though in fact such 'executions' were probably rare indeed. A third source could be the Celts. They revered the head in their religion and often preserved severed heads as family treasures or offerings to the gods in sanctuaries. Celtic cult heads of stone have been found in many places in Britain. Whatever their origins, 'screaming skulls' show a uniform objection to being moved from their chosen niches.

One of these 'guardian' skulls has a modern history coming down to the present day. It resides in Bettiscombe Manor near Sherborne in Dorset. Bettiscombe, a fine building of mellow brick and white stone, dates principally from the early 17th century. Parts of it are much older, however, and the land on which it stands has been inhabited since prehistory. The house was built by the Pinney family, who still farm the rich countryside around. Michael Pinney, a noted archaeologist and historian, lives in the manor house itself. His son, Charlie, breeds shire horses for use in film and television



Above: Burton Agnes Hall in Humberside, home of the head of Anne Griffith after her death in the 17th century. The skull was bricked into the walls in 1900 to prevent its ever being touched again – because it screamed terribly when it was moved

Left: Wardley Hall near Manchester. Its resident skull, supposedly that of a Catholic priest, not only screamed but also caused wild thunderstorms when removed from the premises



work. Both the professional Pinney and his practical son treat their guardian skull with deep respect.

The earliest written accounts of the skull date from the early 18th century, but the story itself starts in 1685. At that time Azariah Pinney, the squire of Bettiscombe, took part in the Monmouth rebellion. Being on the losing side, he was exiled to the West Indies. As it turned out, his family flourished there, and his grandson, John Frederick Pinney, was able to return to Dorset in style and move back onto the lands of his ancestors. With him came a black slave who became part of the household and was soon a familiar sight in the village. The Negro had been promised that, on his death, his body would be returned by his master to Africa, from where he had been taken by slavers as a child.

But Pinney died first. When the slave died shortly afterwards, no one kept the promise to him and his body was buried in the local churchyard near that of his master. It did not rest content and a mournful wailing seemed to emanate from the grave. Crop failure, cattle disease and storms accompanied the months of moaning. Finally the body was disinterred and the skull taken back to its adopted home in the manor house. There it has remained. In recent years it has nested in a shoe box in Michael Pinney's study, fulfilling the double role of family heirloom and harbinger of doom to any that remove it. According to Pinney:

It is said to scream and cause agricultural disaster if taken out of the house, and also causes the death, within a year,



## Great hauntings

of the person who commits the deed. A photographer once carried it as far as the open doorway to take pictures of it, but my wife snatched it back indoors again without anything untoward occurring.

Local lore has it that the last time the skull was 'interfered with', it took its vengeance just as the legend says it would. At the beginning of the 20th century, a tenant who had leased Bettiscombe prior to moving to Australia had a boisterous Christmas party at the manor. During the party he took the skull and hurled it into a horse pond that lay at the side of the house. The following morning the skull was found not in the pond but on the doorstep. How did it get there, when it had to go up a flight of stairs and across a paved patio? One theory, said Michael Pinney, was that

it had been blown there by the wind, but it must have been a very strange and powerful wind. In the Thirties, however, I had an unannounced visit from three young Australians. One of them said that he was the son of the former tenant. His father had indeed died suddenly in Australia within a year of the incident, and his mother had always told him that the skull had brought a curse on them.

### Kept like an animal

Until alterations were made to the attics of Bettiscombe after the Second World War, the guardian skull had traditionally been kept in a small attic room. The remains of this room can be seen today among the chimney stacks and thick oak rafters under the roof. There is an alternative tale to the black slave legend connected with the attic. This version says that a young girl had been kept prisoner there, bedded on straw like an animal and fed through a grille in the door. Although there is no historical evidence for



this story, as there is for John Frederick and his slave, there is a strong family tradition that the skull's 'place' for many years was under the rafters. In the early 1960s, on the track of the Bettiscombe skull, Eric Maple interviewed an old farm worker who claimed to remember 'hearing the skull screaming like a trapped rat in the attic'. Other locals claimed that during thunderstorms there was a rattling sometimes heard in the upper rooms – a rattling made by 'them' playing ninepins with the ancient relic. Exactly who 'they' were was left to the imagination.

Other snippets of lore about the skull seem to have been added on over the years.

Above: skulls placed in the niches of a French Celtic sanctuary as offerings to the gods. Celtic cult heads have been found in many places in Britain and may be a source for the stories of skulls that scream

## A grisly exhibit

Jeremy Bentham, philosopher and political theorist whose reforming zeal helped improve 19th-century life in Britain, shared with the screaming skulls a desire to remain in a favourite place after his death. And he went to elaborate lengths to do so.

Bentham arranged that, when he died, a surgeon friend was to embalm his head and place it upon his skeleton – after the body had been dissected for the teaching of medical students. The skeleton, according to the fun-loving sage's instructions, was dressed in the clothes he had liked best. It was then seated in a glass-fronted upright mahogany box. This was placed in University College,





Michael Pinney and his wife were rather startled when a visitor asked if the skull had 'sweated blood in 1939 before the outbreak of the war, as it had in 1914'.

In fact, the 'screaming skull' of Bettiscombe Manor is probably not that of either the slave or the girl of the legend. In the 1950s, at Pinney's request, it was examined by Professor Gilbert Causey of the Royal College of Surgeons. He pronounced it to be much older than anyone had suspected. It was, he said, the skull of a prehistoric woman, a young girl with delicate features who died between 3000 and 4000 years ago.

So how did it come to be kept at Bettiscombe Manor, and why did such weird legends gather around it?

### Death by the sword

There is some evidence of a Romano-British settlement on the site, which points back to the idea of a foundation sacrifice. But if Professor Causey's estimate is correct, the skull pre-dates any house that could have been in the settlement by several hundred years. An interesting parallel can be drawn with the screaming *ghosts* of Reculver in Kent. For many years a legend had persisted that screams and cries heard in woodland around this site of an early Roman settlement were made by the ghosts of children who had been murdered there. In 1964 important archaeological excavations were begun, during the course of which a number of children's skulls and bones were unearthed. One of these bore marks indicating that it had died by the sword. The pathetic skeletons were rather older than the Roman site, some dating from between 1000 and 500 BC.

Pinney himself has come up with a plausible if unusual explanation of the skull's arrival at Bettiscombe Manor: it made its own way there.

Behind the manor, the steep slopes of



wooded Pilsdon Pen stretch up far beyond the house's tall chimneys. The tor shows signs of prehistoric fortifications dating from about the same period as Maiden Castle, the great earthworks fortress that lies some miles away to the south-east. Besides containing the remnants of hut circles, the tor is also studded with small burial mounds and cairns. Pinney has excavated some of them through professional interest as an archaeologist. Down from the hilltop trickles a clear stream that travels in an ancient culvert through an outhouse attached to the Bettiscombe kitchens. As Pinney explains:

I can't prove it, of course, but I rather suspect that the skull was worked loose from the soil at the top of the hill, tumbled into the stream and rolled down the sloping bed of the brook and down into the outhouse here. Such a find would have been traumatic to say the least in a superstitious age. The finder may well have tried to get rid of



Top: Professor Gilbert Causey of the Royal College of Surgeons, who was called in to give an expert opinion on the Bettiscombe skull. He said it was that of a young prehistoric woman – a far cry from the slave of the traditional story

Above: the ruins of Reculver church in Kent, which is connected with local legends about children's ghosts that scream pitifully.

Skulls dug up on the site proved to be from an earlier time than the stories indicated – suggesting that 'screaming skull' stories have their origins deep in ancient tradition

it, only to feel uneasy about the event – perhaps odd things did occur which convinced him that the skull wished to stay where it had landed. Then the stories began to grow as news of the skull's arrival spread.

The story of the skull at Bettiscombe might easily have reached the ears of old Theophilus Broome at Chilton Cantelo in the adjoining county of Somerset. Perhaps it influenced his decision to arrange that his own head should stay above ground. Whether or not the same idea came to Anne Griffith in what was then Yorkshire from the Bettiscombe tales is anyone's guess.

For their part, Michael Pinney and his family have prospered despite the bizarre relic in the shoe box. So far, however, he has refused to allow the family 'heirloom' to be taken outside the walls of the old manor. 'I'm not superstitious,' he explains with a smile, 'but why risk it?'

London, of which Bentham was a founder and constant supporter. It has remained on a landing of this building near the Gower Street entrance ever since Bentham's death in 1832.

A wax model has replaced the deteriorated head, but the figure still wears the genial philosopher's straw hat and holds his trusty walking stick. A number of witnesses have said that Bentham's ghost, tapping the stone flags with the cane, often walks the corridors near his curious coffin. According to Bill Grundy, the television producer who made a film of Bentham, the ghost 'seems to appear most in times of trouble' – during the 1940 blitz, for example. It is as though the philosopher had appointed himself the 'guardian of University College'.



# Cornering the beast

**What kind of beast was it that could be felled by bullets over and over again – and rise up to go on to new levels of ferocious killing? Was it the Devil in disguise? Was witchcraft behind it? GREGORY PONS follows the trail of the beast of Gévaudan to its bloody end**

THE GREAT SPRING FAIR held at Malzieu, France, in May 1765 was the scene of much celebration, for the dreaded beast of Gévaudan, which had terrorised the region for nearly a year, was believed to be dead.

But the joy was to be short-lived. Suddenly, a horse rider galloped up and shouted: 'Marguerite is done for. The beast has got her.' Marguerite was a friend of Jacques Denis, who had sworn to avenge himself on the beast because of its near-fatal attack on his sister, and he rushed away to find her. At the entrance to the village, where the road turns off towards the fields, Marguerite lay bathed in her own blood. Her throat was ripped open.

That day the beast killed three victims but, in its satiated state, did not even bother to eat them. This time the rage and despair of the peasants drove them to action. They grabbed long forks and bayonets and put the dogs onto the still-fresh scent. Jacques led them. He wanted the skin of the beast and would not settle for less.

Soon enough he found himself face to face with his enemy for the second time. He attacked it violently with his bayonet. The beast seem unconcerned. Baring its fangs, it leapt at Jacques. Luckily the hunters arrived – and it fled.

The King was furious when he heard the news. Stories of the beast were making France look ridiculous in the eyes of neighbouring countries; England especially found it a good opportunity for mocking her rival. The King charged his personal gun carrier, Antoine de Beauterne, with putting an end to the interminable problem.

Denneval, the King's first emissary to rid Gévaudan of the beast, gave up in June 1765. In an ironic farewell to him, the beast rampaged. On 16 June it mangled a little girl who was saved only at the last moment. On the 21st it killed a boy of 14, devoured a 45-year-old woman and carried off a little girl.

Now the priests took up the line that the beast was a 'messenger of evil', sent to punish the people for their sins. The peasants whispered that witchcraft must be involved. Did not the Javois castle in the parish of Besseyre have a bad reputation? Was it not an ancient Druid sanctuary? And what about the strange family called Chastel? The son, Jean,

lived in the wild in a wood – and people feared to mention his name.

For three months Antoine de Beauterne did little. He inspected the environs, drew up some maps and made a survey of the routes taken by the beast. Then, on 21 September, he acted, organising a beat with 40 local hunters using 12 dogs. He chose a starting point near the village of Pommier not far

An engraving of the beast of Gévaudan showing its enormous head and long tail. The peasants began to believe that the beast had supernatural powers when all attempts to kill it failed



from Besseyre. The wood of Pommier contained the Béal ravine at the bottom of which was a wide clearing. Guided by intuition, de Beauterne encircled the ravine and positioned himself and several armed men on one side of the clearing. Some beaters with hunting horns and dogs tightened up the circle. If the beast were there, it would have to pass through the clearing and come out into the open.

The gunmen, their nerves stretched, became impatient. Suddenly the dogs began barking furiously. The beast was there. De Beauterne's intuition was right.

The dogs were unleashed. The beast had about 55 yards (50 metres) in front of it. Now the killer animal was conscious of the men behind and in front. It began turning wildly at the edge of the wood, looking for a hole in the trap. It hesitated and then came forward, trotting into the sunlight. De Beauterne shouldered his gun and fired. Some of the buckshot struck the animal's right shoulder. One shot went right through its right eye and its skull. The beast fell. The gunmen sounded the horn in triumph.

Suddenly, to everyone's stupefaction, the beast of Gévaudan got up and went towards Antoine de Beauterne. One man fired at it,





and the shot went through the beast's thigh. But, animated by a fantastic energy, the creature turned around and set off towards the edge of the wood, where it ran off into a pasture beyond. It had found a hole in the net! It was saved!

Then the beast collapsed – dead at last.

The creature proved to be a rare type of wolf. It was enormous, measuring 6 feet (1.8 metres) from nose to tail. It weighed 143 pounds (65 kilograms) and had a huge head with fangs about 1½ inches (3.5 centimetres) long. The scourge of Gévaudan was stuffed and taken to the King's court where it was an object of curiosity for a time. It was then kept in the Museum of Natural History at Paris until the beginning of the 20th century.

'The beast is dead! The beast is dead!' The shout went up and there was great rejoicing in the villages in the relief after so many deaths. But still many people did not dare to believe it was true.

Jacques Denis, who had followed the great hunt in the Béal ravine, started home, tired but with a light heart. On the way he met his sister Julienne who exclaimed: 'Ah, you believe that the beast is dead. I told you it would be that creature or me and I am not done with it yet. Jean Chastel knows. It is still there and it is watching us! I am going to Besseyre to catch it up again.' And with her

Antoine de Beauterne, King Louis XV's personal gun carrier, shoots the beast at close range after setting a successful trap for it. In this engraved version of the soldier's feat, he uses a pistol instead of a rifle

hair flying in the wind, Julienne set off across the wood, like someone in a raving frenzy. Jacques stood dazed for a moment, then continued towards home. Fortunately, Julienne returned home unharmed, although still greatly troubled.

In the next two months, until the end of November 1765, people no longer heard the sinister alarm bell sounding a fresh disaster from village to village. Yet this new-found peace was not all it seemed. Killings went on, but an order of the King forbade anyone to speak of them.

This 'resurrection' of the beast reinforced superstition. People said that the vicious animal was not a wolf but a fiend – a messenger from hell, as the priests had said.

The month of December was a nightmare. On Christmas Day, snow fell. People entrenched themselves in their homes, with the shutters closed. There was no sound except the lowing of cows.

Jacques Denis set off in search of Julienne, who had not been seen since the day before. She was never seen again. The week after her disappearance some unrecognisable remains were found along the narrow ravine of the Planchette stream – shreds of flesh, bones and some rags.

All winter the carnage continued. Julienne's father, overcome by her loss,







The beast killed by de Beauterne was stuffed and displayed at the King's court, an object of curiosity rather than fear

started a search with Jacques. They went among the strange dolmens and menhirs that are scattered throughout the region and that are associated by tradition with pagan witchcraft and rituals. But they found no trace of Julienne – or the beast.

The winter of 1766 to 1767 was calmer, with only a few disappearances. But in the spring the massacres began again. It is not known how many were killed: many families did not admit to the deaths and the authorities no longer registered them. It came to light, however, that from March to June 1767 there were 14 victims of the beast, all taken in a strip of land 3 miles (5 kilometres) long around Paulhac.

In May and June the peasants went on pilgrimages, hundreds of them to Notre-Dame de Beaulieu at the foot of Mount Chauvet. They celebrated mass and took holy communion. Jean Chastel came armed.

The scene at the Béal ravine where de Beauterne made his kill. This did not end the nightmare for the people of Gévaudan, for a fresh wave of bloody attacks soon began

He had his gun and three cartridges blessed.

On 19 June 1767 a noble of the region organised a huge beat. Three hundred hunters and beaters participated. Chastel positioned himself on the Sogne d'Aubert, just as Antoine de Beauterne had placed himself in the Béal ravine. He opened a prayer book and read it. Thus he waited for his adversary.

Suddenly there was a rustling of leaves and a furtive shadow. The beast, pushed forward by the dogs, came out in front of Chastel a few steps away. Chastel finished his prayer and slowly closed the book, taking off his glasses and putting them in his pocket. The beast waited, immobile. It knew that it was about to meet its destiny.

Chastel raised his gun and fired. The beast fell. Chastel said simply: 'Good. You will kill no more.'

It is said that on the spot where the beast died, the grass no longer grows.



## Further reading

Abel Chevailey, *La bête du Gévaudan, J'ai Lu* (Paris) 1968

Claude-Catherine and Gilles Ragache, *Les loups en France*, Aubier-Montaigne (Paris) 1981



# Post script

Your letters to  
THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,

First, let me say *The Unexplained* is real value for money. I hope it goes on forever.

The following personal experience really amazed me. We were living near Andover in Hampshire in 1970, when I started to have 'visions'. They started out of the blue and always came at unexpected times. They lasted for several seconds. I would see a long room: sitting round a table were a family of four. On one side, nearest to me, sat a dark-haired man about 30 to 35 years of age. Opposite sat his wife, who was about the same age. On the other side of the table, facing the mother, sat a plump girl with long hair down her back; she was about 10 years old. Opposite her sat her brother, about 12 years old. All were dark-featured. I had quite a few of these clear-cut visions, until we moved to Wales. As time went on I completely forgot about them.

Then we spent a holiday on the Isle of Wight. One Wednesday at midday we were in Ryde and we went into a café for a meal. While my wife and her sister were ordering dinner my brother-in-law and I sat down at a table. Then I got a real shock. My eyes fell on a party sitting two tables along. The four people I had seen in my visions all those years before were there exactly as I had seen them.

Then the girl happened to look at me. She said something to her mother and the group stared at me, while continuing to talk among themselves. They hardly took their eyes off me. I was tempted to go over to them and ask if they knew me. I regret to say I did not. I have often wondered what they would have said.

Yours faithfully,

Walter Vince

Llandegveth, Gwent

*Are any members of the other party in the café among our readers? And can they provide information that could throw light on this puzzling incident?*

Dear Sir,

A very strange happening that I experienced took place shortly after the first year of my marriage.

I lived with my in-laws for a while. My father-in-law became ill and was taken to hospital. One day, at around 10 p.m., the police called out my mother-in-law to go to visit him at once, as he had taken a turn for the worse. My wife went along to comfort her mother and they stayed all night at the hospital.

I stayed in the house with our son that night. In the early hours I was awakened by loud voices downstairs. It seemed that many people had come back to the house. I quickly went downstairs, noticing that the clock said 2.30. But all the rooms were in total darkness and no one was there. I ran back up to bed and lay there, tense, until around 4.30 a.m. when my wife and mother-in-law really did come back, with the news that my father-in-law had died at 2.30 – the exact time at which I had heard the voices.

Two nights after the funeral, my wife and I had to use the rear entrance to gain access to the house, because I had left my key behind. I was about to enter the main living room when I was met by an overpowering smell of pipe smoke – as if it had been blown in my face. My wife, who was just behind me,

could also smell it. For about two days the smell lingered in the living room, and then disappeared without a trace, though my father-in-law's pipes still remained, untouched, in their rack.

To me, strange though it seems, my father-in-law did not leave the house until a week after his death.

Yours faithfully,

John Green

Preston, Lancashire

Dear Sir,

Is the past still with us? While visiting a very old but mentally alert lady who was nearly blind I noticed her eyes moving as though watching something in the garden. I asked her what she was watching. She said she wouldn't have told anyone else in case they thought she was 'cracked' (her word). She then described a bustling courtyard with people in old-fashioned dress, cobblestones, a stage-coach arriving, and a lady getting out. She described all the colours and details of the people's dress. She often saw this.

It was rumoured that there used to be an old coaching inn nearby, in which case her back garden would have been the inn's courtyard.

I would like to tell you about several other psychic experiences, which I myself have had.

While I was holding a friend's hand to examine an injured finger I mentally heard the name 'Lilian' and 'saw' a woman in black with black crêpe over her face. I asked my friend if she knew a Lilian who had passed over. She did. I asked if there was anyone living, connected with Lilian, of whom my friend was fond. She said Lilian's stepson was dear to her, and had been dear to Lilian. He was quite well – she had seen him recently. I felt it was a warning. And a fortnight later he died suddenly, while at a conference.

On another occasion a neighbour invited me for coffee. I hadn't spoken to her before, although I knew her husband had died. Going to bed that night I was just thinking how nice she was when I felt a presence. I thought it was her husband. I asked him to give me a message, however trivial, that I couldn't possibly know by normal means. I got the words: 'The key will be found.'

At first I didn't like to tell her, but the following Thursday (the visit had been on Saturday) I told her. The front door key was indeed missing. She hadn't known that until Monday – so I couldn't have got the information from her mind. It was not an important message, I know. But how did I get it?

I received another trivial message after a comparative stranger had visited me. After she had gone I found she had left her glasses behind. As I picked them up I 'heard' the song *Aloha beloved*. She was impressed when I told her about it. She said that in Hull, where they had once lived, her friends called it her husband's theme song – they always sang it at parties before going home.

I got a lot of other information while holding those glasses, all of which proved correct. But again it was the (to me) trivial message that I found the most convincing.

Yours faithfully,

Doreen Bennett

Leeds, West Yorkshire



**THE WORLD'S MYSTERIOUS PLACES - 33**  
**Troy Town maze, St Agnes, Scilly Isles**

